DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 221 CG 026 788

TITLE	Join Together Youth Access to Tobacco Project Results. Special Report.
INSTITUTION	Join Together, Boston, MA.
PUB DATE	[95]
NOTE	8p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Join Together, 441 Stuart Street, 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02116; Electronic version:
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; *Health Education; *Smoking; Substance Abuse; *Tobacco; Youth Problems

ABSTRACT

The placement of tobacco retail outlets near schools (especially elementary schools) has potentially harmful implications for youth, since kids get the message that smoking is acceptable. In order to determine how easy it is for youth to buy cigarettes, the Youth Tobacco Project was launched in October, 1995. To find out how accessible cigarettes are in places where youth shop, community groups across the United States were asked to mobilize residents to count the number of retail outlets that sell tobacco products within a quarter-mile radius of a school. More than 500 volunteers from 27 states participated in this project. Collectively, participants found over 1,200 tobacco retail outlets within a quarter-mile radius of a school. Of the 222 schools surveyed, 93% reported that there were retail outlets nearby, representing an average of six outlets located near each school. Convenience and grocery stores were the most common places selling cigarettes near schools. Other communities are encouraged to replicate the study as part of a broad-based strategy to combat substance abuse on the local level. Numerous suggestions for action are listed, including: distribute your project findings at places parents frequent; check whether stores have proper warnings posted saying it is illegal to sell cigarettes to youth; form teams of kids and parents to count cigarette advertising near schools; and encourage schools to educate students about the hazards of smoking. (TS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 395 221

----SPECIAL REPORT----

JOIN TOGETHER YOUTH ACCESS TO TOBACCO PROJECT RESULTS

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. KOZEL

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG026788

JOIN TOGETHER YOUTH ACCESS TO TOBACCO PROJECT RESULTS

HUNDREDS OF VOLUNTEERS CANVAS NEIGHBORHOODS NEAR SCHOOLS AND FIND OVER A THOUSAND TOBACCO OUTLETS!

How easy is it for kids to buy cigarettes? That's what Join Together wanted to know when it launched its Youth Tobacco Project in October of 1995. To find out how accessible cigarettes are in places where kids shop, Join Together asked community groups across the country to mobilize residents to count the number of retail outlets (*i.e.*, convenience stores, gas stations, restaurants and grocery stores) that sell tobacco products within a quarter-mile radius of a school. More than 500 volunteers from 27 states participated in this project.

WHAT THEY FOUND:

Collectively, participants found **over 1,200 tobacco retail outlets** within a quarter-mile radius of a school. Ninety-three percent of the 222 schools surveyed reported that there were retail outlets nearby. This represents an average of six outlets located near each school. As the chart on the next page indicates, convenience and grocery stores were the most common places selling cigarettes near schools.

OTHER FINDINGS:

- There are **76 stores selling tobacco products** near one public school in Passaic, New Jersey. Many of these stores also sold candy and other items that appeal to youth.
- **Loose cigarettes are available** at stores near a school in New Haven, Conn. Youth there say that some store clerks easily sell these to minors.
- **Cigarette packs are readily accessible to teens** at a store in Newport, New Hampshire and could be easily shoplifted. Students alerted the store owner to this fact and as a result, the rack displaying the cigarettes was moved behind the counter.

Join Together, 441 Stuart Street, Sixth Floor, Boston, MA 02116; Ph: (617) 437-1500; F: (617) 437-9394

CBU26788

JOIN TOGETHER TOBACCO PROJECT RESULTS

- High school students in Oshkosh, Wisconsin say **it is easy to purchase cigarettes** from certain stores located near the schools. The kids know which salespeople will sell to minors and they shop during the hours when those employees are working.

- **Availability of tobacco products is widespread** in Fayetteville, NC. However, this tobacco project revealed that there are no cigarette vending machines near this school. Therefore, cigarette sales occur in outlets such as convenience stores and gas stations.

Type of Outlet	Number	Percentage
Convenience Store	300	24%
Grocery Store	261	21%
Gas Station	188	15%
Restaurant	153	12%
* Other	112	9%
Liquor Store	106	9%
Drug Store	72	6%
Vending Machine	44	4%
TOTAL	**1,236**	**100%**

* On the survey form, teams recorded "other" tobacco outlets, including **laundromats, candy stores, card stores, bowling alleys, paper stores, take-out pizza / deli places, and thrift stores**. Clearly, children frequent these types of establishments, which sell products that appeal to them. It is important to note that among youths ages 12 to 17 years old who usually bought their own cigarettes in 1989, about 85% often bought them from a small store, 50% from a large store, and 15% from a vending machine. These figures come from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office on Smoking and Health.

JOIN TOGETHER TOBACCO PROJECT RESULTS

WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS PROJECT:

Community volunteers acted individually, or formed teams, and canvassed their neighborhoods to measure the extent of cigarette availability within a quarter-mile radius of schools. They counted the number of tobacco sales locations in convenience, grocery and liquor stores, gas stations, restaurants, and vending machines. Participants recorded results on a summary sheet, which they sent back to Join Together for analysis and development of this report.

In 27 states, more than 500 volunteers (402 youth; 124 adults) were involved in counting tobacco outlets within a quarter-mile radius of 222 schools. These schools represent over 100 communities from across the country. Communities as diverse as Anchorage, Alaska; Winner, South Dakota; Ellsworth, Maine; and Jupiter, Florida, representing all four corners of the United States, submitted results to Join Together.

This tobacco outlet counting project generated a great deal of interest, enthusiasm, and participation among concerned citizens.

For instance:

- Seventy-five youths, accompanied by 3 adults, counted 24 tobacco retail outlets near Boyne City Public Schools in Boyne City, Mich.;
- Sixty-five youths, on their own, counted 12 outlets that sell tobacco products around a middle school in Creston, Ohio;
- Thirty-five youths and 3 adults in Passaic, N.J., found 70 outlets in the area near an elementary school in their community;
- Twenty-five youths and 4 adults counted 31 outlets near a high school in Monroe, Louisiana;
- A single volunteer in Laredo, Texas, surveyed 27 schools in his area and found a combined total of 125 outlets; while another individual from Leominster, Mass., surveyed 22 schools and found a total of 55 outlets.
- A team of 2 adult volunteers in Martinsburg, W.V. counted 42 stores around 20 schools.

JOIN TOGETHER TOBACCO PROJECT RESULTS

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

Community teams selected a total of 222 schools for this project, approximately half (45%) of which were elementary schools. Middle schools represented 30%, while high schools comprised 25% of the total number of schools surveyed.

Half (49%) of the areas surveyed surrounding schools were classified as rural, while 28% of areas were classified as urban, and the remaining 23% was classified as suburban. This means that youth access to tobacco is not just a big city problem—it affects rural communities all across the country.

Almost two-thirds of communities described the area in which the school is located as mixed commercial & residential; one-third indicated the areas were residential.

WHY THESE RESULTS ARE IMPORTANT:

Quantifiable projects like these are important in raising public awareness about the problem of teen use of tobacco. The fact is, more than 3,000 kids start smoking each day, and more than one million youngsters start each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office on Smoking and Health. And this number is on the rise, the CDC tells us.

Some of the most effective prevention programs to reduce youth smoking are communitywide efforts that combine education and public policy approaches. The placement of tobacco retail outlets near schools (especially elementary schools) has potentially harmful implications for youth, since kids get the message that it is OK to smoke. For many communities, this Join Together Tobacco Project is a first step in educating people about youth access to tobacco. It also sets the stage for further communitywide public policy action, such as sting operations, vending machine bans and retailer education.

Join Together, 441 Stuart Street, Sixth Floor, Boston, MA 02116; Ph: (617) 437-1500; F: (617) 437-9394

JOIN TOGETHER TOBACCO PROJECT RESULTS

HOW TO USE YOUR FINDINGS:

Once your community has counted the number of outlets that sell tobacco near a public school, you can use your findings as part of a broad-based communitywide strategy against substance abuse. These results can serve as a catalyst to bring together various groups -- including educators, parents, health care workers, businesses and the media -- to brainstorm about other solutions to underage tobacco use and other substance abuse problems.

Some next steps to consider:

- ❖ Distribute your project findings at places parents frequent (workplaces, stores, religious organizations and social clubs) to educate them about this important problem and encourage them to help devise solutions.

- ❖ Work with your local department of public health to initiate sting operations (sending undercover youth into stores to attempt to buy cigarettes) to pinpoint which stores actually sell tobacco products to youth under age 18 (which is illegal). Follow up by sending a letter that says the kids were seen buying cigarettes in their store. Release the names of these stores to the media, to schools and to parents.

- ❖ Examine the placement of tobacco products in stores. See if products are placed in locations that appeal to youth. If so, ask merchants to move these displays to behind the counter.

- ❖ Check whether stores have proper warnings posted saying that it is illegal to sell cigarettes to youth. If not, remind merchants that they are required by law to post such signs.

- ❖ Provide tobacco retailer training for store owners, managers and clerks.

- ❖ Form teams of kids and parents to count cigarette advertising near schools (including signs, posters, billboards and promotional giveaways). Present your findings to your local zoning board to ask them to restrict tobacco billboards near schools.

- ❖ Encourage schools to educate students about the hazards of smoking. One way to do this is by sponsoring a poster contest for kids. The winning posters can be made into billboards, calenders, and public service announcements.

- ❖ Learn what other groups and organizations are doing in your community to prevent kids from smoking, and join together with them to increase the impact of your efforts.

For additional information about this Project, call or write to: ASTRID KOZEL at Join Together, or contact her electronically at astrid@jointogether.org URL: http:/www.jointogether.org

Join Together, 441 Stuart Street, Sixth Floor, Boston, MA 02116; Ph: (617) 437-1500; F: (617) 437-9394

The following communities participated in Join Together's Youth Access to Tobacco Project:

City	State	City	State
Anchorage	AK	Shelby	NC
Malvern	AR	Beatrice	NE
El Cajon	CA	Newport	NH
Moreno Valley	CA	Carteret	NJ
Pueblo	CO	East Brunswick	NJ
Avon	CT	Jamesburg	NJ
East Haven	CT	North Brunswick	NJ
East Windsor	CT	Passaic	NJ
Hartford	CT	Piscataway	NJ
Portland	CT	Succasunna	NJ
Jupiter	FL	Carson City	NV
Boone	IA	Long Island City	NY
Kuna	ID	New York	NY
Bedford	IN	Cincinnati	OH
Michigan City	IN	Columbus	OH
Tell City	IN	Creston	OH
Monroe	LA	Warren	OH
Beverly	MA	Wooster	OH
Boston	MA	Oklahoma City	OK
Brockton	MA	Hillsboro	OR
Hyannis	MA	Winner	SD
Leominster	MA	Yanikton	SD
Ellsworth	ME	Laredo	TX
Albion	MI	Coupeville	WA
Boyne City	MI	Friday Harbor	WA
Saint James	MI	Langley	WA
Troy	MI	Oshkosh	WI
Oxford	MS	Prairie Du Chien	WI
Fayetteville	NC	Martinsburg	WV